

Remarks

Claims 1 – 23 remain pending and reconsideration of those claims is requested.

Claim 1 features an hour meter having a display that provides a visual indication of a total time a lawn or garden tractor engine has operated and a visual indication of engine operation time remaining in a predetermined service time interval. A plurality of segments on the display are selectively displayed in a first optical state or a second optical state. A power supply is mounted to the lawn or garden tractor. The claim further features a display drive coupled to the power supply that displays the plurality of segments in the first optical state at a beginning of a predetermined service time interval. The display drive includes a timer for monitoring intervals the display drive is energized by the power supply and which changes the optical state of a first segment from the first optical state to the second optical state when the timer reaches a predetermined service time interval. The drive incrementally changes the state of a remainder of the plurality of segments from said first optical state to said second optical state as additional portions of the predetermined service time interval elapse to visually display the amount of engine operation time remaining in the predetermined service time interval.

The Examiner relies most heavily on the Jaw patent (US 6,490,543) to reject claim 1. At column 7 of Jaw it is noted that “A second embodiment meter/display is an analog display.... Referring to Fig 5, the meter/display 108 has various indicator level bars. One indicator level bar 110 shows rate of usage (usage hours per hour). Another indicator level bar 112 shows life used (hours) while a further indicator level bar 114 shows remaining life (hours).” Col 7, lines 15-25.

This recitation neither shows nor suggests a display drive which includes a timer for monitoring power supply energization of a display. This failure of the reference is not overcome with the teaching of US 4,688,117 to Dwyer et al. For these reasons claim 1 is allowable. Even if the combination of references is valid the monitoring of energization times of the display drive featured in the claims is not contained in the combination so that the combination does not present a *prima facie* grounds of rejection. Note, neither the Jaw reference nor the Dwyer et al reference relates to a riding lawnmower or garden tractor and

there would be no reason to choose the simple yet effective device for timing engine usage that is featured in claim 1. For these reasons claim 1 is allowable.

Claims 2 – 9 depend from allowable claim 1 and are also allowable.

The Examiner's attention is directed to claim 3 which features the hour meter of claim 1 wherein said display drive resets the plurality of segments to the first optical state after the predetermined service time interval elapses and an additional predetermined time period transpires.

In rejecting claim 3, the Examiner points to Jaw at column 3, lines 1-12. (See office action at page 3, last paragraph.) Jaw notes, "If the system/part is to be serviced or replaced, then the system/part is serviced or replaced, and the lifeometer resets remaining life level..." There is no showing nor a suggestion of the resetting after a predetermined period as featured in claim 3 and for this additional reason claim 3 is patentable.

Claim 5 features the hour meter of claim 4 wherein all of the segments remain in said second optical state for a predetermined time after the service time interval elapses to provide a visual indication that service is due.

The subject matter of Claim 5 is neither shown nor suggested by the Jaw reference. The reference to Dwyer et al to col 8, lines 42-47 does not overcome this deficiency in the teaching of Jaw since there is no reference to maintaining the segments in an optical state for a predetermined time after the service time interval elapses. Accordingly, claim 5 is patentable.

Claim 10 recites an hour meter having a display that provides a visual indication of a total time a lawn or garden tractor engine has operated and a visual indication of engine operation time remaining in a predetermined service time interval. A display has a plurality of segments that are selectively displayed in a first optical state or a second optical state to form a graph. A power supply energizes the display. A display drive coupled to the power supply displays the plurality of segments in said first optical state at a beginning of a predetermined service interval. The display drive includes a timer that monitors time intervals the display drive is energized and incrementally changes the state of each of the segments of the graph from said first optical state to said second optical state as the predetermined service time interval elapses to visually display the amount of engine

operation time remaining in the predetermined service time interval. A switch is included for manual resetting the predetermined service interval and the plurality of segments to the first optical state. The display drive automatically resets the plurality of segments to the first optical state if said switch is not actuated and a predetermined engine operation time elapses after the predetermined service time interval transpires.

For the reasons stated above with reference to claim 1, this claim is neither shown nor suggested in the prior art cited by the Examiner and is therefore allowable.

Claim 11 features a method for use with an hour meter having a display that provides a visual indication of a total time a lawn or garden tractor engine has operated. Practice of the method visually displays an amount of engine operation time remaining in a predetermined engine service time interval. The method includes selectively displaying a plurality of segments on said display in a first optical state or a second optical state and displaying the plurality of segments in said first optical state at a beginning of a predetermined engine service time interval. Engine operation is timed and an accumulated engine operation time is maintained. The optical state of a first segment is changed from the first optical state to the second optical state when the accumulated engine operation time reaches a given portion of the predetermined engine service time interval has elapsed. The state of the remainder of the plurality of segments of the graph from is incrementally changed from said first optical state to said second optical state as the accumulated engine operation reaches additional portions of the predetermined service time interval elapse to visually displaying the amount of engine operation time remaining in the predetermined service time interval.

The subject matter of claim 11 is neither shown nor suggested by the references cited in the last office action and claim 11 is therefore allowable.

Claims 12 – 22 depend from allowable claim 11 and are also allowable.

The commentary above with regard to apparatus claims 3 and 5 is applicable to claims 14 and 16 and for these additional reasons these claims are allowable.

Claim 23 is resubmitted and features a method for use with an hour meter having a display that provides a visual indication of a total time an engine has operated. The method includes providing a visual indication of engine operation time remaining in a

predetermined service time interval by providing a graph on the display having a plurality of segments that are selectively displayed in a first optical state or a second optical state. The plurality of segments are displayed in said first optical state at a beginning of the predetermined service interval. The state of each of the segments of the graph is incrementally changed from the first optical state to the second optical state as the predetermined service time interval elapses to visually display the amount of engine operation time remaining in the predetermined service time interval. The predetermined service time interval and the plurality of segments are reset to the first optical state when a manual reset switch is actuated. The predetermined service time interval and the plurality of segments are automatically reset to the first optical state if the manual reset switch is not actuated during the predetermined service time interval and a predetermined engine operation time elapses after the predetermined service time interval elapses.

The subject matter of claim 23 is neither shown nor suggested in the art cited by the Examiner. The commentary regarding claims 3 and 5 above is also appropriate here. For these reasons this claim is patentable.

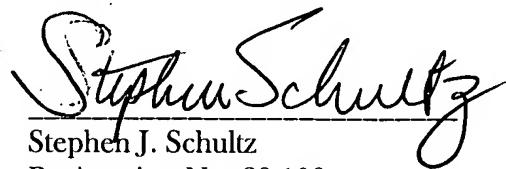
All claims pending in the application are in condition for allowance and a prompt notice of allowance is solicited.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any required fee under 37 C.F.R. §

1.17 in connection with this communication to our Deposit Account No. 23-0630.

Respectfully submitted,

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